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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS
AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Letter dated 14 May 1991 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith the text of the message from His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, on the occasion of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity, Africa Day, 25 May 1991 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could arrange for the text of the present letter and its annex to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 30 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) C. KATSIGAZI
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/46/50.

ANNEX

Message from the President of Uganda and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity on the occasion of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity

It is a great honour for me on behalf of the Government and the people of Uganda and on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to share with you this auspicious occasion when we remember 25 May as the day of the founding of the Organization of African Unity.

Twenty-eight years ago today, at Addis Ababa, 32 African Heads of State and Government placed their signatures on the Charter which established the Organization of African Unity. The main objective of setting up the Organization was to unite the African people and fight for the emancipation of the continent from the yoke of colonialism.

Today, we can proudly say that OAU has served Africa well through collective and sustained action to rid the continent of colonialism and to promote African unity and dignity. In coordination with our compatriots in the respective countries, as well as our sympathizers abroad, using armed struggle, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Namibia were liberated. South Africa is on the verge of democratization.

The unity of Africa is real and should be consolidated. We have tended to speak with one voice on virtually all issues affecting our continent. We should be proud of this because unity, even symbolic unity, is better than division.

The world around us is currently going through profound and fundamental changes of both a political and economic nature. In Europe, the perspectives of change will culminate in a single European Market in 1992. There are changes in super-Power relations that are having a big impact on global politics. Eastern Europe is no more. Indeed, even on our own continent there are important changes - in apartheid South Africa and in various African countries whose peoples are forging change in favour of democratic systems of governance. Africa will therefore of necessity have to adjust to these changes.

We enter the twenty-first century with an awfully fragile scientific and technological base at a time when the rest of the world is making astronomical advances. Those changes are bringing in their wake a new industrial revolution whose consequences for Africa are bound to be enormous.

In the face of all this, it is timely and pertinent that Africa should preoccupy herself with the question of what policies and strategies should be adopted to bring about development and how the continent will cope with the changes of the 1990s and beyond.

In this multi-faceted crisis, Africa's response should be critical and determined. Politically, Africa has got to create an enabling political environment that promotes the participation of the people in the process of government and development planning. This environment should guarantee human rights and the observance of the rule of law. It should also ensure high standards of accountability on the part of those in public office. This is very important because political freedom is a necessary catalyst to economic development.

It is for this reason that the issues of democratization and popular participation were seriously discussed by the last OAU summit in July 1990. On that occasion, African leaders adopted the Declaration of the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World. In that Declaration, we recommitted ourselves to the further democratization of the African societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in Africa in tandem with the deployment of increased efforts in economic development.

The ideal of freedom compels us to use this occasion to rededicate ourselves to the struggle against the obnoxious system of apartheid. Africa accepts that there have been positive changes in South Africa, notably the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of political organizations and, more recently, the announcement that the Land Acts, the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act would be repealed.

However, while we welcome the decision to repeal the pillars of apartheid, we should avoid the temptation to interpret it to mean that apartheid has been eliminated. The pillars of apartheid derive their authority from a more fundamental law - the South African Constitution. The Constitution of South Africa is therefore the foundation of apartheid and until that constitution is changed, apartheid cannot be said to have been eliminated.

It is because of this that OAU maintains the position that the international community should maintain international measures, including sanctions, against South Africa. For this to be effective Africa must summon the collective will to enforce sanctions if other countries are to follow suit. In this regard, I regret the action of the European Economic Community to lift sanctions against South Africa.

We call upon the liberation movements inside South Africa to intensify efforts to forge a united front against the Pretoria régime. We also call upon the South African Government to do all in its power to stop the black-on-black violence that has caused untold misery to the African people in that country.

Since the inception of OAU, political crises in Africa have hardly dissipated - in fact they have proliferated. Civil wars and inter-State disputes have raged on. In this regard, OAU and its regional groupings have

played a significant role by exerting efforts towards finding African solutions to African problems. I refer particularly to the significant and commendable role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in solving the Liberian civil war, to the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) in the conflict-torn Horn of Africa, as well as in the Sudan and to the east and central regional leadership in the Rwanda conflict. OAU must endeavour to strengthen its mechanisms for conflict-resolution.

The civil wars in Liberia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola and the Sudan, to mention but a few, are absolutely wasteful, both in life and property. In our present state, the economy of Africa cannot afford to divert her meagre resources from development purposes to war. Besides, these wars are the source of untold suffering to millions of our people as many of them get displaced and others are put to flight as refugees. Today one African migrant out of five is a refugee and one refugee out of every two in the world is an African. This is truly a sad state of affairs.

It is for this reason that we should, more than ever before, commit ourselves to removing the sources of conflict and to endeavour to solve these conflicts by peaceful means where they exist. I call upon all parties in the conflict areas to heed this call in the interest of Africa and her peoples.

The second response to Africa's crisis is to take a critical look at our socio-economic situation and devise realistic, if painful, measures to get us out of this crisis and to propel ourselves into the modern era of technology and development.

Today, almost all African Governments are entirely preoccupied by crisis management. Nearly 30 years ago when we were getting independence, there was great optimism that the continent could and would effectively mobilize its vast resources to meet the needs of its people. By the mid-1980s, this optimism had given way to disillusion as Africa slid deeper and deeper into the mire of economic decay.

Today, Africa remains the poorest and least-developed continent in the world. Out of 41 least-developed countries in the world, Africa has the largest number - 28. Food importation is on the increase. Infant mortality is a staggering 120 out of 1,000 children born alive. Sixty-five per cent of adults can neither read nor write and a mere 23 per cent of Africans have access to clean drinking water. Industrial capacity goes underutilized, unemployment is rampant and per capita incomes have steadily declined.

This is compounded by decline in economic performance resulting from:

(a) An escalating and excruciating debt and debt-service burden;

(b) Reliance on production of raw materials whose prices are constantly falling or fluctuating;

(c) Worsening terms of trade;

(d) Protectionism in Western Europe, North America and Japan;

(e) Lack of a sound technological base;

(f) An increasingly hostile international economic environment;

(g) A fragmented African market, in spite of our efforts at creating regional markets.

Africa has attempted to redress the problem by adopting:

(a) The Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos (1980);

(b) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 (APPER);

(c) Africa's common position on Africa's debt crisis (1987).

However, Africa's economic crisis should not be seen solely in the context of macro-economic policies. The problems are rooted in the economic distortions of Africa's production and consumption patterns inherited from the colonial past. We continue to produce what we do not consume and consume what we do not produce. This is a fundamental distortion which cannot be solved by demand-focused macro-economic policies alone.

We see a major part of the solution to the African economic crisis as lying in economic integration. The Final Act of Lagos, which was adopted by the African Heads of State and Government in 1980, called for the establishment of an African Economic Community through a treaty. After years of deliberation by African Ministers, the Treaty is now ready for adoption and signature. I have every hope that the African Heads of State and Government will sign this Treaty at their next meeting at Abuja, Nigeria.

The importance of establishing the African Economic Community cannot be over-emphasized. It is the most critical issue of our time, with far-reaching socio-economic and political implications for our countries, individually and collectively. Indeed, it can be said to be the most sterling achievement of our Organization since its inception nearly three decades ago.

Two years hence, OAU will be 30 years of age. These have been years of change and turmoil everywhere. Our own unvarying concerns have been two-fold: to safeguard our unity and independence and to overcome the blight of poverty. Today we rededicate ourselves to this noble mission.